

The Foundations of the Spiritual Building

“For the Lord shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory”

Introduction:

+ The New Testament highlights the need *“to be spiritually built up”*, both on the individual and corporate levels (the church at large). Examples of these biblical passages are Acts 9: 31 & Jude 20.

+ This concept is primarily taken from Jesus’ talk in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:24-27) where He concluded the sermon by talking about the man who built his house on the rock and the other who built it on the sand.

+ The same concept occurs again frequently in the writings of the apostles, both in the book of Acts and the epistles.

+ According to Paul, after we are saved and we start our walk with Christ, we need to focus on and pay attention to our spiritual building (being built up).

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” Colossians 2: 6, 7

Readings:

“But You, O Lord, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations. You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favour her, yes, the set time, has come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and show favour to her dust. So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord and all the kings of the earth Your glory. For the Lord shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory. He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer. This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord. For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven the Lord viewed the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those appointed to death, to declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem, when the peoples are gathered together...” **Psalm 102:12-22**

““The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” says the Lord. “As for Me,” says the Lord, “this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants’ descendants,” says the Lord, “from this time and forevermore.” Arise, shine; for your light

has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.” Isaiah 59: 20–60: 3

Main Points:

+ The above references clearly highlight that God desires Zion to shine with the light of His presence. In Isaiah 59: 20, God clearly addresses Zion. Zion is God’s dwelling place amidst His people. When God is truly present and indwelling, Zion (the Lord’s place) is filled with glory and brightness and hence God’s purpose is fulfilled. God’s purpose is to cast out the darkness of the surrounding earth and to provide sufficient light for everyone who desires to find and see the correct path. This light shall guide the faithful and shall also guide the kings. [The mention of “*the kings*”, here, indicates that the gentiles who rule her shall also be led to the Lord’s path].

Thus, great fruits will result from the presence of a bright shining Zion due to the Lord’s dwelling in it and the cloud of His glory upon it. “Zion” is “Jerusalem”; the two words are synonyms (refer to 1Kings 8: 10, 11).

+ However, according to what the Psalm (Psalm 102: 12 – 22) says, we notice that the glory of the Lord does not come upon Zion unless Zion is built up. The words of the scripture indicate that the building of Zion has to be according to the Lord’s plan and design. The parts of the scriptures that talk about this subject tell us of the many details that God gave for the building of His city and His temple amidst that city; hence, highlighting that the Lord has a specific design for Zion/Jerusalem.

The scriptures highlight this matter from the very beginning. In Exodus 25 we read that God wanted a “*tabernacle*”. Then, in 1Kings 8, we read about the “*temple*”. In Ephesians, the talk is about “*His church*”. We then read about the “*New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven*” in the age to come.

In all these references, we notice that there is something that God’s people should do first so that God’s glory may come upon them. For example, in the case of tabernacle, they had to complete building. In the last two chapters of Exodus, we notice the repetition of the phrase “*as the Lord had commanded Moses*”.

+ Using the language of the New Testament to understand the Lord’s words (in the Old Testament), we perceive that in the New Testament, we –the believers –have become “*the New Zion*”, i.e. the New Jerusalem, the temple of the Living Lord. [Refer to 1Corinthians 3: 16; Revelation 21: 2, 3]

This in turn implies that we need to make sure that our inner New Jerusalem, the Lord's temple inside us, is built according to the Lord's plan and design. This is not an unfamiliar subject because the book of Acts speaks a lot about the building of the churches in the Spirit. Besides, in his epistles, apostle Paul speaks about the necessity of edifying/building up the believers [Acts 9: 31; Acts 20: 32; Romans 14: 19; Romans 15: 2; Ephesians 2: 22; Ephesians 4: 12; Colossians 2: 7; 1Thessalonians 5: 11; 1Timothy 1: 4] Apostle Peter speaks about the same subject as well (1Peter 2: 5); apostle Jude also emphasises and highlights the same truth (Jude 20).

+ As is the case with any building, it is important to pay great attention to the spiritual foundations of the building of our inner temples (the unseen, yet real ones). We may start to build our inner temples through the spiritual teaching we receive and our personal worship times; yet, it is very important to make sure that the building is correct and faultless and has strong and solid foundations so that the glory of God may come upon it.

As God's temples of the New Testament, His glory should come upon us in exactly the same way as it used to come upon the temple in the old days. Hence, Christ, in His glory, can be seen in us and through us. This, in turn, shall respond to man's constant inner cry: *"we want to see Jesus"* (John 12: 21b).

+ Below are some principles that help in correcting the foundations of our inner spiritual building, strengthening it and making it prepared to receive the glory of God.

"For the Lord shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory"

In building houses or various other projects, engineers may sometimes find out that the foundations were not correct or appropriate; yet, they have their technical means in correcting the building even after the process of building had started. They do so through what the science of engineering calls: *"injecting the foundations"*. The same applies to the spiritual building.

+ Below are **7 main principles** against which we need to review our lives:

1. An orderly life (a disciplined and committed spiritual life)
2. Open (Free) hands ready to receive the Lord's Commission
3. Altars of Prayer and the tents of the righteous
4. The heart and the insight (are so essential)
5. Obedience and its practical application in following the Lord
6. Self-denial and being connected to the chains of the divine will
7. One's attitude towards the challenges of the Kingdom of God

1. An orderly life:

- The expression, “*orderly life*”, occurs in the writings of the first church. The first church valued and handed down to the believers the necessity of an organised and orderly spiritual life.
- An orderly and organised life means a consistent and disciplined spiritual life. Below are some examples of biblical references that help us comprehend this principle: [1Corinthians 9:24–27, Colossians2: 6-7, 2Timothy2: 3-7, Hebrews4:11, 2Peter1:3–11]
- Practically, this indicates that the believer has to commit himself to regular times of worship so that the inner man may receive sufficient spiritual food. Exactly as the outer man requires a certain amount of food daily depending on one’s age, health and activity, the inner man requires sufficient portion of spiritual food according to each individual’s needs.
- Besides, this orderly life indicates that one should determine the priorities of his life as a sign of understanding that he is a Kingdom man who lives for the Lord and His Kingdom (Romans14:8, Romans1:5).
- In such manner, the grace of salvation that works in us can be manifested in its richness, glory and mystery revealing Christ in us (Ephesians2:7, Galatians2:20).

2. Open (Free) hands ready to receive the Lord’s Commission:

- In the rituals of ordaining the Levites, a ram is offered; it is called “*the ram of consecration*” (Leviticus8). In the original Hebrew language, it is called “*the ram that fills the hands*” i.e. the offering of the ram that fills the hands of the person who is being ordained in order to be consecrated.
- This has a deep spiritual significance. The rituals indicate that at the time of being ordained and set apart/consecrated to the Lord, the Levi presents himself and stretches out his hands so that the offering of consecration may be put in his hands and is waved. [This “*waving*” is a special ritual that means putting the offering in the Levi’s hands and moving it, i.e. turning it up and down in the hands, as a sign that it fills the hands and that the person accepts it.] This implies that the hands should be empty at the start. In other words, the person has to get rid of all what occupies his hands, i.e. to empty and vacate his life of every idle and vain preoccupation in order to receive a concern for the Kingdom of God, each according to the divine Commission he is called for (Ephesians2: 10).

- In order to practically apply this in the New Testament, we need to search our hearts and cast out from our lives all what is alien from God and His Kingdom so that we may truly become ready to receive a divine Commission in the Kingdom of God.

- Besides, the hands refer to man's relationships; one stretches out his hands to greet others and also uses his hands to refer to people and so on. This means that we should have "*holy hands*" (1Timothy2:8), i.e. holy, chaste and pure relationships. We also need to acquire a humble heart; this humility should reflect and appear in the movements of one's hands; prophet Isaiah uses the term "*pointing the finger*" (Isaiah58:9) to refer to pride and being haughty in dealing with others.

- There are various references in the scriptures about the necessity of keeping the hands clean/holy and lifted up in worship (Psalm24:4, Psalm63:4).

+ The ritual of "*waving the hand*" which we read about in the ordination of the Levi signifies that one should accept to follow and serve God whatever the circumstances are, whether the circumstances were good or difficult!

3. Prayer altars and the tents of the righteous:

- In Genesis 8, we read about the very first altar that was built after the flood. [This was the first altar that the bible mentions in the five books of Moses which are the books of scripture that reveal to us God's mind regarding the essential and preliminary matters in the spiritual life.] This first altar indicates man's restoration to fellowship with God after this fellowship was cut due to man's evils (Genesis6:3, Genesis8:20-21).

- After that, we read about Abraham's altar which was always accompanied with a "*tent*". The "*tent*" is a reference to being separated from the world and its evils and the necessity of this separation if we desire to enter into deep and continuous fellowship with God (Genesis12: 7-8, 2Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

- Then, we read about the conditions that God has set for the altar and commended Moses to observe (Exodus20:22-26). We notice that these conditions came immediately after Moses received the Ten Commandments; these conditions were for the altar of fellowship of anyone of God's people; this altar is different from the general altar for the priesthood ministry, which was described later with the tabernacle (Exodus27:1-8; Exodus30:1-10).

- Then, we read about the "*tents of the righteous*", in the Psalms, where the voice of rejoicing is heard. The voice of rejoicing signifies "*worship*" and this in turn implies that these tents have altars of fellowship with God inside them.

"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous..." Psalm 118: 15

- We need to build these worship altars, the unseen spiritual altars, in our homes. This happens when all the members of the family meet regularly at specific times to worship the Lord together. As a result, our homes are blessed and protected; they are, in fact, guarded by the Lord's angels, according to the writings of the first church.

4. The heart and the insight (our great need for them):

- The Holy Scriptures praised David for the heart he had:

"... He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'" Acts 13: 22

Besides, in the book of Chronicles, we read:

"Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat; and the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the Lord, of all the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries for the dedicated things..."All this," said David, "the Lord made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans." 1Chronicles 28: 11, 12, 19

+ God purpose, from the very beginning, was to write on man's "heart". Yet, because man was not able to understand or perceive God's desire, God started by writing on the stone; He wrote the commandments on the stone and gave them to Moses.

As God was writing on the stone, He indeed meant to write this writing (the law) on the heart.

After the fall, man's heart became like "stone" and then it was transformed to a "heart of flesh" by redemption; and hence the law became implanted in it and engraved on it.

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36: 26

Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in my covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the

covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” Hebrews 8: 8 – 10

It is clear that due to David’s sensitive and awake heart (1Samuel 24: 5; 2Samuel 24: 10), he was able –through his open insight –to see the Lord’s mystical matters regarding the temple. David gave the plans of the temple –which he received from the Lord –to his son, Solomon, testifying that the Lord made him understand these matters and had written them on his heart!

- Similarly, we need to keep the spiritual insight –granted to us in Jesus Christ (1John5: 20) –open, so that we may discern what is true from what is false. According to Apostle John, the truth is everything which is against the evil and falsehood that prevail in the world around us. The spiritual insight helps us see, discern and choose to walk in truth and stay away from falsehood. However, we still need to be watchful and –through daily repentance –shake off anything that clings to us from the corruption of the world around us.

- This requires us to keep our eyes pure because the evil eye fills the whole being with darkness whereas the pure eye allows the light of God to fill our being.

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” Matthew 6: 22, 23

Let us; therefore, be watchful and vigil when we watch the media, for example, not to allow ourselves look at inappropriate scenes in order to keep our eyes clean and pure.

5. Obedience and its practical application in following the Lord:

- The Lord always used the phrase: *“Follow Me”* when He called anyone. In its Greek origin, this phrase means *“Cling to Me”*. This signifies that there is nothing that separates the person from Christ.

- We should, therefore, count the cost of following the Lord because Christ’s way is narrow and difficult as He had pre-warned us.

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Matthew 7:13,14

Besides, in following Jesus, we actually follow a crucified Christ who obeyed to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” **Philippians 2:8**

Thus, “obedience” is a readiness to die all day long for the sake of sincerely following the Lord in the narrow road.

“As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’” **Romans 8:36**

Yet, there is a promise of victory.

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” **Romans 8: 37**

Obedience is also a lesson that we learn and grow in every day like Christ who learned obedience, though He was the Son of God.

“...though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.”
Hebrews 5: 8

The sufferings we go through –which the Lord allows and controls –are the unseen teacher who leads us in the path of obedience.

“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” **Philippians 1: 29**

The purpose of this is to be transformed into Christ’s image.

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” **Romans 8: 29**

“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ...”

Philippians 3: 7,8

6. Self-denial and being connected to the chain of the divine will

“For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not laboured; others have laboured, and you have entered into their labours.” **John 4:37,38**

The above words highlight that each person has a specific role in the Kingdom of God. Yet, this role is linked with what is before it and what is after it. Those who came before

us had completed their work and hence have prepared the way for us to carry out the work and the role assigned to us by God.

Because God is the One who designs all the divine plans of the Kingdom, He knows what was already accomplished and what still needs to be done. Thus, God assigns the tasks that still need to be done to His faithful servants who wait patiently before Him seeking to receive a true divine commission; those who do not rush to do what pleases them in ministry or do the things that do not glorify God nor complete the consecutive linked chains of the divine work.

To illustrate this, let us read **Jeremiah23:21,22**:

"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings"

The scriptures warn us that exactly as there were false prophets in the Old Testament, there can be false teachers in the New Testament.

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction." **2Peter 2:1**

Thus, we need to be attentive remembering Apostle James' warning:

"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things..." **James 3: 1, 2a**

- We need to perceive quite well that only One was described as "the Alpha and Omega".

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last..." **Revelation 1:11**

We should be aware that the human nature inside us desires so much to have a task/work that it starts and presents as something that the person has done alone and that is specific to him; not knowing that by so doing, the person desires to make himself divine (as a result of the poison that the old serpent has breathed in Adam and Eve) and desires to become the alpha and omega!

In other words, the person desires to start an independent work that is not associated with anyone else so that this work may bear his name and make him remembered.

This is a natural thing that is hidden in the human nature; it has entered the human nature by the fall and was hidden inside.

However, the spiritual life and walking in the Spirit make us realise that we should complete the chains of God's will "together". Through a divine wisdom, God's Will moves towards one unchangeable purpose and that is: *the Lord's second coming to make us enter with Him into His glory!*

7. One's attitude towards the challenges of the Kingdom of God

- We live amidst constant changes of the age because –as described in the Bible –this life is "shaken". Yet, we serve an unshaken Kingdom as written in **Hebrews 12: 27,28**

"Now this, "Yet once more", indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a Kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

- This requires us to have/acquire some essential features:

a. To be soldiers of the Lord

"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."
2Timothy 2: 3

A soldier should always be girded and ready. [Refer to Exodus 12: 11; Luke 12: 35; Nehemiah 4: 17, 23; Nehemiah 6: 3]

b. To have daring Faith:

"...in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him..."
Ephesians 3: 12

This daring faith is strengthened and balanced by full surrender to the Lord.

c. Full surrender to the Lord

In this context, we need to remember Christ's words to His Father amidst His great suffering as He was approaching crucifixion. Jesus said:

"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." **Luke 22: 42**

May this be our motto when we go through pain and suffering!

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